

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: June 1, 2008
	Section 18: Discipline in Resource Homes	Version: 1

POLICY	OLD POLICY: 404.34
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) **prohibits** the use of the following types of **punishment** by resource families including but not limited to:

1. Corporal punishment¹;
2. Physical exercise (e.g., push-ups, running);
3. Requiring or using force to make the child take an uncomfortable position;
4. Verbal remarks that ridicule the child and/or his or her family;
5. Denial of an emotional response;
6. Denial of essential services (e.g., health care, food, clothing, bedding, sleep, mail, or family visitation, etc.);
7. Threats of removal or denying reunification;
8. Shaking;
9. Placement in a locked room; and/or
10. Holding with physical, mechanical, or chemical restraints.

DCS allows the following techniques for discipline by resource families. See Related Information for additional details.

1. Verbal and written contracts (i.e., to agree upon desirable behaviors);

Note: DCS strongly encourages the use of lesser forms of discipline including contracts and behavior management, before corrective action is used.

2. Behavior management through incentives and rewards; and

Note: The resource family with input from the Family Case Manager (FCM), Child and Family Team (CFT), and other professionals (e.g., child's psychologist) will develop a behavior management program for the child as needed.

3. Corrective action for undesirable behaviors.

Note: Corrective action **does not** include physical discipline. See Related Information for details on corrective action.

DCS **allows** the use of physical restraint² by a resource family **only** when the family has received specific training in the use of physical restraint and only when the force is reasonable and necessary to:

¹ Corporal punishment: Physical hitting or any type of physical punishment inflicted in any manner upon the child's body.

² Example: A protective hold. This does not include mechanical restraint.

1. Stop a child who is threatening physical injury to himself, herself, other persons, and/or property; and/or
2. Remove a weapon from a child as a matter of self-defense or defense of others and when authorized use of physical restraint is documented in the child's [Case Plan \(SF2956\)](#).

The resource family will notify DCS within one (1) business day of all instances where physical restraint are used.

Exception: If injury occurred to anyone (child or resource family) DCS will be notified immediately.

DCS will work with the CFT to explore alternative solutions, including, but not limited to, placement in a more restrictive setting if physical restraint becomes necessary on a routine basis.

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The FCM will:

1. Ensure that when a child is placed in out-of-home care, the resource family is familiar with and understands the DCS discipline policy;
2. Ensure that when requested, the resource family receives assistance with creating, implementing, and enforcing discipline plans (including contracts, behavior management, and corrective action). See Related Information for details. See [Tool 8.C: Corrective Action](#);
3. Communicate with the child and the resource family regarding the progress of the child's behavior and response to discipline;
4. Seek supervisory input regarding appropriate actions when discipline issues arise that are beyond the scope of this policy. Consider every appropriate alternative before considering a placement disruption and placement of the child in a more restrictive setting. See separate policies, [8.17 Respite Services for Resource Families](#), and [8.38 Placement Changes](#); and
5. Ensure that the resource family receives, understands, and signs a copy of this policy.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Tool 8.C - Supervision of Visits](#)
2. [Case Plan \(SF2956\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

RELATED INFORMATION

General

Discipline involves teaching children that their behavior results in certain consequences; positive behavior leads to positive consequences and negative behavior leads to negative consequences. An awareness of this helps children control their own behavior. The most important factor in the effectiveness of discipline is the child and resource family relationship. The resource family may not have a long-term relationship with a foster child; therefore, trust may not exist between the child and the resource family. Consequently, certain discipline techniques may not be effective initially and/or may lead to mistrust between the child and the resource family.

Discipline Guidelines for Resource Parents

When used appropriately, **contracts**, **behavior management**, and **corrective action** can be effective methods for encouraging internal control and self-responsibility in children. When any form of discipline is used on a child, the following guidelines are recommended for resource families:

1. Discipline should be consistent with the child's developmental stage;
2. Use encouragement and praise whenever possible to reinforce positive behaviors;
3. Do not take any kind of corrective action while angry. Wait until your anger subsides before implementing discipline;
4. Set clear limits, rules, and expectations; communicate these to the child;
5. If possible, have the child take responsibility for his or her actions and correct his or her behavior or the situation;
6. Give the child choices and involve him or her in the decision-making. This helps a child develop internal controls; and
7. As a rule, the younger the child, the more immediate the consequences should be for inappropriate behavior.

For more information on contracts, behavior management, and corrective action see [Tool 8.C Corrective Action](#).

Providing Assistance and Support to Resource Families

The FCM should assure that the resource family receives support and guidance on creating, implementing, and enforcing discipline plans, if the resource family requests it. The FCM can provide the support and guidance directly if he or she has experience dealing with discipline challenges and is comfortable doing so. Otherwise, the FCM should enlist the help of outside sources such as the child's therapist and refer the resource family to support groups and other community-based resources. When enlisting the help of outside sources, the FCM should provide a copy of this policy (8.18 Discipline in Resource Homes) to assure the provider does not recommend forms of discipline that are prohibited by DCS.

Child Threatening Others With A Weapon

If the child has a weapon and is threatening others with it, but not actually attacking anyone, the resource family should try to avoid confrontation by:

1. Giving the child space;
2. Removing other persons from the area; and
3. Obtaining appropriate assistance to disarm the child.